

***AN ACT REQUIRING THE USE OF HELMETS WHILE USING BATTING CAGES***

## **The Need for Batting Helmets at Public and Private Batting Cages**

Good morning.

My name is Sandra Austin Goldstein. I live in Newington and I am the mom of an 11 year old Little Leaguer.

I am here to talk to you today about the need to require batting helmets at batting cage facilities in the state of Connecticut.

I brought my son to Little League tryouts last spring at Baseball City, an indoor batting cage center in Hartford. I am sure that what I witnessed there is replicated throughout the state at other batting cage facilities.

At the tryouts, I thought that everyone in the batting cages would be wearing batting helmets, that it would be a "no brainer", but I was wrong.

What I observed was that the teens and adults running the tryouts who were operating the pitching machines and fielding balls did not wear batting helmets. What I also observed after tryouts were batters using the batting cages without any helmets at all.

For those who operated the pitching machines, there was a net "protective barrier" in front of them, but others retrieving balls to the side of them were not covered by this barrier.

According to their pitching machine manufacturers, these machines have the ability to pitch from 70 -100 miles per hour (mph.)<sup>1,2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Iron Mike" pitching machine, manufactured by Master Pitch, [www.masterpitch.com](http://www.masterpitch.com)

Their batting cages are 70 feet long, giving room for a pitching machine to shoot out the balls and the staff to field them. If the machine were to be placed the distance from a Little League pitcher's mound to home plate-46 feet-the batter would have the reaction time of about four tenths of one second, to hit - or turn away from- a pitch.<sup>3</sup>

There are many factors that come into play when determining the exit speed of a ball heading toward the pitcher and fielders, but baseballs have the potential of travelling at "highway speeds" whether you're facing the pitching machine or the batter.

Baseball players from T-ball all the way up to the Major Leagues wear batting helmets when they're playing baseball. They are an accepted piece of equipment in the sport, they are scientifically proven to significantly reduce injuries and it defies logic why this piece of safety equipment is not mandatory in batting cage facilities.

Without batting helmets, anyone in a batting cage is at risk for concussions, blindness, facial fractures, permanent brain injury and more.

Batting cage owners need to step up to the plate and protect batters by requiring batting helmets.

It will help to keep the cost of their liability and worker's compensation insurance down, it will help protect the quality of life for their players and it will be a proactive way to reduce a significant risk of accidents that needlessly exists today.

Please consider voting in favor of this bill so that we can prevent a tragedy before it happens.

Thank you for your time.

*James Austin Goldstein*

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<sup>2</sup> "Hack Attack" and "Jr. Hack Attack" manufactured by Sports Attack, [www.sportsattack.com](http://www.sportsattack.com)

<sup>3</sup> Little League Inc. safety newsletter, As Safe As Possible (ASAP), June 2010 • Volume 17/Number 3